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BERNART DE VENTADOUR'S REFERENCE TO THE TRISTAN STORY

In the matter of dating the *estoire* of the Tristan story, critics, we might say, are divided into two schools. One we may call the German school and the other the French school. The former places the date of the *estoire* near the close of the twelfth century; the latter places the date at the middle of that century, or in the first half of the twelfth century.

The former school gives the following approximate dates of the various redactions of the Tristan story: the *estoire*, second half of the twelfth century; the *Berol*, 1190; the *Thomas*, after 1165; the *Eilhart*, 1190; the *Folie*, the *Continuation of Berol*, and the *Prose Tristan* at later dates.

The French school, headed by Professor Bédier, gives the approximate dates of the various redactions as follows: the *estoire*, before 1154 (1120–50); the *Berol*, 1165; the *Thomas*, 1160; the *Eilhart*, 1190 to 1200; *Folie Douce*, twelfth century; *Folie Berne*, 1170, the *Prose Tristan*, 1230; the *Ulrich von Turheim*, 1250; the *Gotfried von Strassburg*, thirteenth century; *Sir Tristrem*, thirteenth century; and *Tavola Ritonda*, thirteenth century.

Miss Schoepperle, by virtue of her admirable *Tristan and Isolt*, has become the chief exponent and champion of the school that holds to the late date of the *estoire*.¹

The question of the date of the *estoire* is of the highest importance in the matter of Miss Schoepperle's theory. Her late date for the

¹ By *estoire* we mean that early, if not original, version of the Tristan story that the above-named redactors seem to have taken as their model or source. The chief Tristan versions claim to have a written source. This leads to the conclusion that there was an original Tristan that has been lost.

[While this article was going to press, Mrs. Gertrude Schoepperle Loomis died, after a brief illness, in Poughkeepsie, New York. The editors of *Modern Philology* take this occasion to express their regret that so promising a scholar should have been cut off in the midst of an extremely successful career. Students of modern languages are indebted to Mrs. Loomis not only for various illuminating contributions to the study of Arthurian romance, but also for an excellent edition of an Irish *Life of Columcille*, published, together with a translation and discussion of sources, by her and A. O'Kelleher, in 1918.]

estoire is based on the assumption that the *estoire* was "courtly." As the courtly element did not enter until late in the twelfth century, Miss Schoepperle's main theory falls to the ground if we can show that the Tristan *estoire* was already known in the first half, or the middle of that century.

It is not our purpose to enter into a discussion, in this paper, of the courtly elements in the Tristan story. We shall merely remark that the passages that may be cited as being courtly in both the *Eilhart* and the *Berol* redactions are found, almost without exception, in the second part of each.

In discussing the matter of the date, Miss Schoepperle says¹ that M. Bédier takes the year 1154 as a *terminus ad quem* for the *estoire*, and that he is led to do this by an allusion to Tristan in a lyric of Bernart de Ventadour. In a footnote on the same page she states that Golther also accepted this allusion as establishing a *terminus ad quem* for the date of the *estoire*. Bédier says: "A partir de 1154, les troubadours, Bernard de Ventadour, Augier Novella font des allusions à des épisodes de la légende de Tristan, et ces allusions sont si rapides et si sommaires qu'il faut admettre, pour qu'elles aient été comprises, que d'anciens poèmes français étaient répandus déjà au fond de la Provence."²

Golther says "Aus Berol, der afz. *Prosa* und *Folie* gewinnen wir somit das Bild eines alten, verlorenen Tristanromans um 1150."³

The poem of Bernart de Ventadour in question is Number 44, *Tant ai mo cor ple de ioya*. The reference to the Tristan story in this poem is as follows:

Plus trac pena d'amor
de Tristan l'amador
que'n sofri manhta dolor
per Izeut la blonda.⁴

Miss Schoepperle gives the following reading of these verses:

Tan trac pena d'amor
Qu'a Tristan l'amador
Non avenc tan de dolor
Per Yzeut la blonda.⁵

¹ *Tristan and Isolt*, I, 112.

² Joseph Bédier, *Thomas, Roman de Tristan*, II, 154-55.

³ Golther, *Tristan und Isolde*, p. 2.

⁴ C. Appel, *Provenzalische Chrestomathie*, 1920.

⁵ Bartsch, *Chrestomathie provençale* (1904 edition), p. 63.

While the wording of these two readings is different, the sense is identical. The former states the question positively, the latter negatively. In both readings it is evident that the reference is to a long and well-defined story. It is more than a mere allusion to Tristan; the reference points definitely to a love story. It implies that it was a story fraught with great grief for the hero. Its application in the poem shows that the name Tristan had already become a synonym for an unhappy lover. In the first reading we are told that the lover, Tristan, suffered many a pain on account of it (love). The passage not only names the heroine, Isolt, but it characterizes her with the epithet, *la blonda*. This epithet describes the very acme of beauty according to French taste, even as today Rostand, describing a Roxane, reaches a climax with the words, *et la plus blonde*.

There are references to Tristan in several other poems of Bernart de Ventadour. Appel calls attention to the name Tristan in the poems numbered 4, 29, 42, and 43 in his edition. Diez also refers to the use of the name Tristan in these lyrics; with Bischoff and Zingarelli he thinks that it may be employed as a pseudonym. In none of these lyrics, however, is the reference as significant as it is in Number 44.

Miss Schoepperle holds that Bédier and Golther are not justified in accepting this reference to the Tristan story as establishing a *terminus ad quem* for the *estoire*, basing her arguments on the variety of readings given of the verses in the poem that are associated with the date 1154; she concludes that, "owing to these variants, it is impossible to determine where the poet was when he wrote the poem or where the lady was to whom he addressed it."¹ Miss Schoepperle then gives these variants as follows: "In one manuscript:

Lo cor ai pres d'amor,
que l'esperitz lai cor,
e lo cors estai alhor
pres de leis en Fransa.²

In another manuscript:

Que'l cor ai en amor
pus de nulh amador
car l'esperitz en lay cor
lonh de mi en Franza.³

¹ *Op. cit.*, I, 112-17.

² "Crescini, *Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto*, LXIX, dispensa I, p. 78. This is the reading of Ms. C, preferred by Zingarelli, *Studi medievali* III, fasc. 1, pp. 49-68."

³ "This is the reading of Ms. R. Crescini, *loc. cit.*"

A group of three manuscripts gives:

Mon cor ai en amor
e l'esperitz lai cor;
e si'm sui ieu sai aillor
loing de leis, en Fransa.¹

Another group of three manuscripts has:

Lo cor ai pres d'amor,
que l'esperitz lai cor,
e'l cors estai sai alhor,
lonh de leis, en Fransa ?²

In the first variant there is no comma between *leis* and the clause *en Fransa*. In the last verse of this variant, the scribe must have written *pres* where he should have written *lonh*. The reasons for holding that this is a scribal error are that six of the eight manuscripts have *lonh* instead of *pres* in that position, and that it is impossible to make sense if we keep the word *pres*. It would put the poet's body (*cors*) near her (*leis*, the beloved) in France, and remove the need of his mind or thoughts (*esperitz*) rushing thither (*lai*) as they are represented as doing in the first part of this variant. *Pres* is the opposite of *lonh* and it is a psychological fact that a word often calls up its opposite and is superseded by it. If we substitute the word *lonh* for *pres*, the passage is not only translatable but conforms to the other variants in sense: "My heart is enamoured, or imbued with love, so that my thoughts rush thither, and my body is elsewhere, far from her, in France."

The second variant cannot be satisfactorily translated. Diez in classifying this poem says: ". . . da sie 'fern von der Herrin in Frankreich' geschrieben ist" (showing where he places the poet when he wrote this poem). In a footnote, Diez compares this variant with another as follows: "Der Stelle im P.O., wo das Lied S. 7 steht (*Gr.* 70, 44):

Et lo cors estai aillor
Loing de leis en Fransa—

könnte man die Lesart der Handschrift 2701:

Car l'esperitz en lay cor
Lonh de mi en Franza—

¹ "Mss. AIS. Crescini, p. 78."

² "Mss. CMVa. C has *Pres* for *lonh* in the last line. Cf. Crescini, *op. cit.*, 78."

entgegen setzen, welche die obige Annahme umstossen würde, *allein die letztere Handschrift ist zu incorrect, um ein bedeutendes Gewicht in die Wage zu legen.*"¹

The next variant, given in a group of three manuscripts, has a comma between the clauses, *loing de leis* and *en Fransa*.

The last variant, also given in a group of three manuscripts, has a comma between the clauses *lonh de leis* and *en Fransa*.

While the only diacritical mark used in the manuscripts, as shown by the facsimile reproductions given by Appel in his edition of Bernart de Ventadour, is the period, the editors have seen fit to set off *en Fransa* with a comma in six manuscripts as against two where they did not. Furthermore, Appel in the 1920 edition of his *Provenzalische Chrestomathie*, not only sets *en Fransa* off with a comma but also sets *alhor* off with a comma. The effect of this is to make the interpretation that the poet was in France when he wrote this poem, all the more imperative.

Leaving aside the question of punctuation, the clause *en Fransa* by virtue of its position could hardly refer to *leis* (Eleanor) either in Provençal, Old French, or in Modern French, unless introduced by a relative. After all, the matter of punctuation is determined by the wording, the word-order, and the sense.

Appel² prints side by side the two groups of manuscripts A and V, giving the entire poem, and constructs from these readings his critical text. The stanza in question in Group A is identical with the same stanza in the first group of three manuscripts given by Miss Schoepperle, and Group V of Appel gives the stanza we are considering as it is found in his chrestomathy, 1920, with the exception of *mon* for *mo*, *qe* for *que*, and *lonc* for *lonh*:

mo cor ai pres d'amor,
que l'esperitz lai cor,
mas lo cors es sai, alhor,
lonh de leis, en Fransa.³

The punctuation here is identical with that in Group A and Group V; so, if Appel is not responsible for this punctuation, he

¹ Diez, *Leben und Werke der Troubadours*, p. 27. The italics are ours.

² C. Appel, *Bernard von Ventadorn, Seine Lieder*, p. 258.

³ C. Appel, *Provenzalische Chrestomathie*, p. 58.

at least accepted it in 1915 (date of his *Bernard von Ventadorn, Seine Lieder*), and did not change it in 1920.

Appel¹ gives a translation into German of the entire poem, where the stanza under discussion reads as follows: "Mein Herz ist der Minne nahe, denn meine Seele läuft dort hin, aber der Leib ist an anderem Orte, hier, fern von ihr (der Geliebten, oder von ihm, dem Herzen), in Frankreich." Thus, Appel takes *pres* as an adverb. It may also be taken as a past participle from the verb *penre*, or *prendre*. This may be the more probably correct reading, for in four manuscripts we have *en* instead of *pres*, in this position. The idiom may be related to the modern French, *épris de*. This makes no material difference in the translation, however, as it would give us: "My heart is imbued with love, so that my spirit rushes thither, but my body is here, elsewhere, far from her, in France."

We have seen that six of the manuscripts clearly put the poet in France when he wrote the poem, and that the two manuscripts that leave the position of the poet in doubt are faulty; one of these two, but for a scribal error, agrees with the other six.

In view of the foregoing facts, Miss Schoepperle is not justified in saying that we do not know where the poet was when he wrote the poem, and the fact that Zingarelli preferred the first variant, according to Miss Schoepperle's remark in her footnote given above, does not do him honor.²

The question as to where the lady was to whom Bernart de Ventadour addressed this poem, depends upon *who* the lady was. In other words, if we can answer Miss Schoepperle's objections to connecting the poem with Eleanor of Poitou, we also answer the question as to where the lady was that Bernart de Ventadour addressed. This question can be determined only to a degree of certainty by arguing the reasonableness of the supposition that the poet was addressing Eleanor of Poitou.

Appel states that the oldest information given us about the genealogy of the Ventadours is that furnished us by Gottfried von Viegeois—*Ex Chronico Gaufredi prioris Vosiensis*.³ From this

¹ *Bernard von Ventadorn, Seine Lieder*, p. 268.

² After reading Appel's work on *Bernard von Ventadorn* and Jeanroy's review in *Romania*, XXXVI, 1907, of Zingarelli's *Ricerche sulla vita e rime di Bernart de Ventadorn*, we are led to believe that Zingarelli is not always logical.

³ *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, XII, 424.

information, and from that furnished by Baluze, *Histoire de la Maison d'Auvergne*, he draws a diagram of the family tree, beginning with Archambaud II, Vicompte de Comborn, and ending with Eble VI.¹

Eble II was given the title *Cantator*, and he taught our poet how to sing. Both the Latin and the Provençal sources of information are agreed that Eble II was a great lover of the art of poetry. It is only natural, then, that he should take a great interest in Bernart de Ventadour, one of the most celebrated of the Provençal troubadours. It does not matter that he was of humble origin, as attested by the Provençal biographer and the poet Peire d'Alvernhe. The poet's great gift furnished what the fashions of the courts at that time demanded.

Again, for the same reason, it is not strange that Bernart, when he had to leave the court of his benefactor, should turn to another and more brilliant court. It is also natural that that court should have been that of Eleanor of Poitou, for as Appel indicates, there was a close relationship between these two houses. Appel, on this point, quotes an anecdote which he ends with the remark: "Literar-historisch ist uns die Anecdote wertvol weil sie auf die engen Beziehungen Zwischen den Hofen von Poitiers und Ventadour hinweist."²

Furthermore, Eleanor was a patroness of poets. Suchier says: "Guilhelm IX, Enkelin Eleanore hat als Königen von Frankreich und mehr noch als Königen von England, wo ihre Neigung mit der ihres Gatten zusammen traff, die Dichter begünstigt."³

That Bernart de Ventadour did go to the court of Eleanor is attested by the Provençal biographer, Uc de Saint Circ: "Et el s'en partic et anet s'en a la duçessa de Normandia, q'era joves e de gran valor, e s'entendia mout en pretz et en honor et els benditz de sa lauzor."⁴

Suchier seems to be convinced that Bernart went to the court of Eleanor for he states unequivocally that he went to Normandy to the splendid court of Eleanor, the wife of Henry of Anjou.⁵

¹ C. Appel, *op. cit.*, pp. vii ff.

² *Op. cit.*, p. xi.

³ *Geschichte der Französischen Literatur*, I, 63.

⁴ C. Appel, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, I, 64: "Er (Bernart) aber zog nach der Normandie an den glänzenden Hof der lebenslustigen Eleanor, der Gattin Heinrichs von Anjou, mit welchem sie 1154 den Thron Englands besteigen sollte und fand bei ihr gute Aufnahme. Nachdem sie Königin von England geworden war blieb er eine Zeit lang in der Normandie zurück."

Appel says: "Wir können nur so viel zugeben, dass Bernard die Dame noch als Herzogin von Normandie, d.h. zwischen 1152 und 1154, besuchte."¹ Diez also accepts this and in fact it is generally conceded that our poet spent some time at the court of Eleanor in Normandy.

The fact that Bernart wins the love of the Viscountess Ebles II, and that this was the cause of his leaving the land, is also given by the Provençal biographer: "Mout duret lonc temps lor amors anz qe'l vescoms, maritz de la dompna, ni las autras gens s'en aperceubutz. E qan lo vescoms s'en fo aperceubutz, en estraignet en Bernart de si."

According to Diez he went away for good: "Bernart verliess also das Schloss, die Wiege seines Lebens, auf immer." That Bernart was not driven away by the Viscount, as supposed by many, but went at the request of the Viscountess herself, who was locked up and closely guarded on account of her indiscretion, is shown by the words: *en estraignet en Bernart de si*, and *Adoncs fetz la dompna dar comiat a'n Bernart, e fetz li dir qe'is partis e is loignes d'aquella encontrada*. This is borne out by one of Bernart's poems.

The Provençal biographer describes Bernart as a handsome man, a good poet and singer, courtly and educated: "E venc bels hom et adreitz e saup ben trobar e contar, et era cortes et enseignatz."

That Eleanor liked the poet and his singing is also shown by this same biographer: "E plazion li fort li vers e las chanssos d'en Bernart don ella lo receup e l'anret e l'acuillic e'l fetz mout grans plazers. Lonc temps estet en la cort de la duquessa, et anamoret se d'ella, e la dompna s'enamoret de lui, don en Bernartz en fetz maintas bonas chansos."

We cannot enter into a discussion of the reliability of this Provençal biography. We have followed the version that Appel gives in his 1920 chrestomathy. In his work on Bernart de Ventadour he constructs this from the variants that he there gives and discusses.² Suffice it to say that the facts given about the life of our poet in this biography are pretty well supported by references in his own poems and those of other poets. His low birth, for example, is set forth by the satire of Peire d'Alvernhe.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. xvii.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. xi ff.

After discussing the doubt raised by students like Zingarelli and Stronski, who seem to reject all the evidence furnished by the Provençal poets and hold that they were not in earnest about their love songs, Appel, while admitting that that is largely true in the case of the majority of these poets, says: "Bei unserem Bernart aber dürfen wir uns hinter seinem *Aziman* und *Conort* Wesen von Fleisch und Blut vorstellen, eben so wie hinter Dantes Beatrice und Petrarcas Laura."¹

Again (p. xxix) Appel says: "Dasz Bernart seine Liebe als wirklich erscheinen lassen will, ist offenbar," and he cites many passages to show this.

Even if we had to admit (which we do not) that Bernart's declarations were purely conventional, it would detract very little from the evidence, since we know that he was at the court of Eleanor and that it was customary for poets to address high-born dames in song.

Appel fixes the date of the birth of Bernart de Ventadour between 1120 and 1130; he² was, therefore, in the height of his vigor about 1154.

Bergert says that Eleanor of Poitou, daughter of William X and granddaughter of William IX, the first known troubadour, was born about 1122. This would make her about the same age, or a little younger than our poet. We are further told by Bergert that, "Die von den trobadors genannten oder gefeirten Damen," was married in 1137 to King Louis VII of France, whom she accompanied on his crusade; that, following her faithlessness, she was put aside by the King, and that a council, May 21, 1152, held that the separation was valid on the ground of blood relationship; that, on May 18 of the same year, Eleanor married again, this time the Count of Anjou, Henry Plantagenet; and that: ". . . die Koenigen (Eleanor) hat angeblich in Bernard von Ventadorn einen aufrichtig ergebenen Sänger und Liebenden gefunden, der ihr viele seiner schönsten Lieder gewidmet hat."³

We have seen that Bernart de Ventadour, although of low birth, was handsome, a good singer and poet, a courtly and educated man who had no scruples against having an affair even with the noble wife

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. xxviii.

² *Op. cit.*, p. lix.

³ *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, Heft 46, 1913.

of his benefactor. We have seen this fascinating man go to the splendid court of the gay Eleanor, who was also rather free from scruples against having an affair of the heart with another than her lord; we have seen that she was a patroness of troubadours, that she liked the love poems addressed to her by Bernart de Ventadour, that she fell in love with him and he with her; also that when she left France to ascend the throne of England with Henry of Anjou in 1154, Bernart remained for some time in France. He was young and separated from the object of his desires. It was also fashionable for a troubadour to address his lady love, especially a high-born dame, in song.

What more natural, then, that he should address the poem in question to Eleanor who was far away at that time in England? We cannot discover any other person who would be so likely a subject for the poem as Eleanor. The only other likely person would be the Viscountess of Ventadour and that would put the date of the poem, and with it, the date of the *estoire* earlier even than 1154. Furthermore, this poem must refer to Eleanor because the poet says that he is in France, and if he had been in Provence he would not have said France.

It is also reasonable to suppose that he composed this poem soon after being separated from Eleanor in 1154, while he still keenly felt his loss. The tone of the poem itself shows feeling combined with the tenets of courtly love.

So while we cannot prove with mathematical accuracy, that Eleanor of Poitou was the lady addressed in our poem, we are yet warranted by the facts in saying that the presumption is very largely in favor of the supposition that she was.

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